DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 348 FL 017 324

AUTHOR Paulsell, Patricia R.
TITLE The Syntactic and Grammatical Characteristics of Business German Language: A Methodological Problem.
PUB DATE May 87
NOTE 24p.; In: Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions. Conference Proceedings; see FL 017 281.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Communication; *German; *Grammar; Higher Education; Language Research; *Languages for Special Purposes; Second Language Instruction; Student Needs; *Syntax; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

A discussion of problems in teaching business German focuses on methodologies used to introduce syntax and grammar at the introductory and intermediate levels. The formalistic, progressive approaches to grammar and syntax that American students are accustomed to in language instruction put them at a disadvantage because they: (1) make it difficult for instructors to adapt the typical osmosis exercises of some business German texts; and (2) are biased in favor of certain approaches to language learning that do not form a particularly good foundation for the study of business German. Three aspects of instruction are examined further: (1) recent research concerning the most important syntactical and grammatical characteristics of business and technical German; (2) problems experienced by average American businesses created by the creative writing/Alltagssprache-oriented approaches of most German texts; and (3) the need for development of appropriate methodologies for teaching business German syntax and grammar. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

624

ED293348

THE SYNTACTIC AND GRAMMATICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BUSINESS GERMAN LANGUAGE: A METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

by

Patricia R. Paulsell
Associate Professor of German
Michigan State University
College of Arts and Letters
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1027

Presented at the Sixth Annual Conference on Languages
and Communication for World Business and the Professions
sponsored by Eastern Michigan University
Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 7-9, 1987

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Vogt

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL017304

THE SYNTACTIC AND GRAMMATICAL CHARACTERISITICS OF BUSINESS GERMAN LANGUAGE: A METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

by
Patricia R. Paulsell
Michigan State University

While the past decade has witnessed an unprecedented demand for and astonishing resultant growth in enrollment in the area of German for business and professional purposes, there has been minimal progress in the development of appropriate materials for the teaching of these more specialized language skills in the American college classroom. Indeed, while the United States presently represents the largest single market for such courses, what little movement there has been toward the development of materials for fairly wide dissemination has occurred largely in England, in Germany or, if in the U.S., as a result of efforts by German-trained pedagogues. While materials developed in England have limited usefulness in U.S. classrooms because of the considerable differences in both business vocabulary and business practices between the U.S. and England, usable and quite sophisticated materials have been developed by the Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft and are currently being developed, albeit slowly, under the tutelage of the Goethe Institut within the scope of its workshops on business German. Although the materials developed thusfar through the Goethe Institut workshops hold great promise, they, as well as the materials from the Duisberg Gesellschaft suffer from problems endemic in materials prepared by German pedagogues specializing in "Sprachlehre für Ausländer," i.e. they either ignore the issue of the didacticization of grammar and syntax completely (as with the Goethe Institut materials) or they somehow expect the grammatical and syntactical characteristics of the language to be transferred to the students by a process of osmosis (as with the CDG and older Hueber texts). Considering the fact that most of these

pedagogues have been trained in Germany to deal with heterogeneous groups of students in an intensive language learning situation which takes place in the country of the target language, this phenomenon is not at all surprising. Nevertheless, anyone who begins to use the materials produced by German pedagogues will quickly come to the realization that these materials have not necessarily been developed with the specific needs of American college teachers in mind, whose teaching situation is not at all analogous to that of their German colleagues. On the one hand American teachers have relatively homogeneous student groups who speak one mother tongue, an occurrence which might be classified as an advantage, but, on the other hand, American teachers are disadvantaged by the fact that they must teach students with generally low levels of international awareness in non-intensive language learning situations in classrooms which are far removed from Germany . These disadvantages, coupled with a lack of adequate funding which severely limits the scope of efforts to collect appropriate materials , have great impact upon the methodologies of teaching business German in the United States. The ideal situation, for example, would provide for each individual business German teacher the financial support to spend a few months in Germany perusing available materials for a unit on, for example, the German banking system, whereby a sequence of materials could be chosen, which would be appropriate to both the students and the teaching goals in level of linguistic sophistication, area specialization, international awareness, cross-cultural sensitivity, and grammatical/syntactical teachability. Since American college teachers do not, however, live in the best of all possible academic worlds, most of them find themselves at the mercy of budget constraints and/or materials developed by others on the basis of classroom situations not very analogous to their own.

While I, like most of my colleagues teaching business German, have learned to live with the paucity of fully adequate materials with regard to the areas mentioned above, I have come to the conclusion over the past ten years of teaching Business German that our efforts are further complicated by the methodologies used to introduce German grammar and syntax on the introductory and intermediate levels. These methodologies place business German

students at a disadvantage for two reasons. Firstly, American students are accustomed to a formalistic, progressive approach to grammar and syntax in studying foreign language, which makes it difficult for the instructor to adapt the typical osmosis exercises of some business German texts for use in our classrooms. Secondly, the methodologies to which most of these students have been exposed are themselves biased in favor of certain approaches to language learning which do not form a particularly good foundation for the study of business and technical German. In the light of these observations, I would like to concentrate upon two areas for further consideration: (1) recent research concerning the most important syntactical and grammatical characteristics of business and technical German, and (2) the foundation regarding some of these characteristics to which almost all of our students have been exposed before coming into the business German classroom. In conclusion, I will offer some advice on the development of methodologies for treating certain grammatical and syntactical characteristics of business German.

Permeating our entire discussion must be the fact that business language is considered by members of our profession in the United States to be a step-child, a peripheral area of linguistic study. This is reflected not only in the lack of recognition of our efforts in teaching and publishing in this area, but also in the lack of serious research into the nature of this aspect of language itself. Such research normally provides the base for the development of appropriate teaching methodologies. The lack of such a base is certainly a major factor in the slow development of appropriate materials addressing the grammatical and syntactic peculiarities of business German language. I believe that the research has not been forthcoming because business language occupies much the same position in the hierarchy of legitimacy in the linguistic arena which, for example, the genre comedy occupies in the literary arena: research and teaching in that area are tolerated but not really taken too seriously. Our profession is biased in favor of the development of language skills in certain highly regarded areas, i.e. *belles lettres*, and in certain rigorously defined styles developed in composition and conversation formats which are anchored in a "creative

writing"/"Alltagssprache" approach. Thus, it is not surprising to find that very little of the research in the area of linguistic description of business German, as scant as it is, has been done in the United States. We must, instead, look to Europe for solid scholarly research in this area.

"Business Linguistics" first surfaced as a field of serious academic pursuit shortly before the First World War in German-speaking Europe and was particularly promoted in the 1930's by members of the Prague linguistic school. After that period of bloom in the 30's interest seemed to wane until about a decade ago.[1] This recent resurgence of interest can probably be traced to the increasing importance of Germany as an international trade partner, and hence the rekindling of interest in teaching German as a business language. The production in this area is, however, not particularly prolific. The definitive recent study of the grammatical and syntactical nature of business German was carried out by two Dutch scholars and published between 1977 and 1979 in a rather obscure Dutch linguistics journal. To my knowledge, this will be the first fairly wide dissemination in the United States of the results of their analysis.

The study, which was published in three parts in the Linguistica Antverpiensia, is entitled "Die Wissenschaftliche Fachsprache der Wirtschaft: Eine Untersuchung Ihrer Syntaktischen und Syntaktisch-Lexikalischen Merkmale"[2] . The authors, J. deCort and P. Hessmann created a statistical basis for their research by assembling 2000 sentences from books by 50 authors in the following fields:

Basic concepts of economic theory
Banking
Money/currency
Stock market/money market/capital market
Federal budget
Taxes/taxation
Federal fiscal policy
Credit system

All of the works were post-1960 and representative of college level texts; no magazines or newspapers were used. The authors viewed the latter as "vulgarisierend" because they are

oriented toward specific reader groups.[3] At this point we are reminded that all such linguistic studies based upon corpi of sentences from selected materials reflect certain biases on the part of the researchers; magazines and newspapers are often considered "vulgarisierend" and therefore not worthy of inclusion. The question arises here as to whether we can indeed use the deCort/Hessmann study for guidance in approaching our methodological problems regarding the grammar and syntax of business German, since most of the materials to which we have access are indeed from magazines and newspapers. A corollary question might revolve around the legitimacy of even using materials from magazines and newspapers. I can, however, assure the reader, after some years of informal analysis of the materials which I use, many of which are drawn from magazines and newspapers, that these materials do indeed seem to reflect the same findings of the deCort/Hessmann study. I would suggest, therefore, that the authors may have spurned the use of the more popular sources without actually analyzing them to see if their biases were founded. Thus, I do feel justified in applying the results of their study to my materials, and, before continuing with a discussion of their results, would like to mention that their study is also based upon much more abundant and long established statistical analyses of scientific and technical German.[4]

For my purposes I not only condensed the roughly 150 pages of the deCort/Hessmann study, but also extracted from it what I felt were the most important points for consideration with regard to possible methods of didacticization of the grammar and syntax of business German. There are five crucial areas for examination and discussion: (1) length and complexity of sentences, including type of hypotaxis (2) passive voice and the so-called "passive substitutes", (3) nominalization, (4) extended modifiers, and (5) semantic problem areas associated with certain grammatical/syntactic structures more common in business language. The subsequent pages contain condensations of the results of the deCort/Hessmann study regarding these five areas.

Grammatical and Syntactical Characteristics of Business German

I. Sentence Types: Frequency and Complexity

A. Complete Sentence Types

1. Simple sentences	38%
2. Complex sentences	42%
a. 2 clauses	33%
b. 3 clauses	19%
c. 4 clauses	6%
d. 5 clauses	4%

B. Number of Words

1. Sentences of up to 8 words	5.5%
2. Sentences of 9 - 16 words	28.5%
3. of 17- 24 words	27.5%
4. of 25- 32 words	17.2%
5. of 33- 40 words	11.1%
6. of over 40 words	9.9%

C. Sentence Element in First Position

1. Subject	55%
2. Prepositional phrase	17%
3. Other adverbials	14%
4. Particles of delimitation or emphasis (wie, so, nur, etc.)	10%
5. Others	4%

D. Types of Attributive Clauses by Frequency

1. Relative clauses
2. Infinitive clauses
3. Subordinate Clauses introduced by conjunctions

a. wenn (conditional)	18%*
b. wenn (temporal)	12%
c. da	11%
d. wie	9%
e. weil	7%
f. so daß	6%
g. während	5%

*Authors' caution: "Wenn"-conditional sentences occur twice as often in a text as might be predicted from the figures above, when one also takes into consideration those conditional sentences which are introduced not by "wenn", but by an inversion of word order. When this inversion occurs, "so" is the most frequently used correlative.

II. The Passive and so-called "Passive Substitutes"

A. The Passive Voice

The authors note that several studies over the years have observed that the passive voice is used far more frequently in scientific and technical texts than in non-technical literature. This was found to hold true for business German, where the passive voice occurs twice as frequently as in non-technical language.

1. Type of verb occurring in the passive, by frequency.
   a. Transitive verbs without prepositional phrase to express agent — 73%
   b. Transitive verbs with prepositional phrase — 22%
   c. Intransitive verbs — 5%
2. The passive with modal verbs.
   a. 38% of all passive constructions were in combination with modal verbs.
   b. Frequency of modals used
      1. können — 56%
      2. müssen — 20%
      3. sollen — 18%
      4. dürfen — 3%
3. Tense according to frequency
   a. Present
   b. Simple Past
   c. Present Perfect
   d. Past Perfect and Future: rare

B. The So-Called "Passive Substitutes" (10% of all finite forms)

These are constructions which "express the passive in other ways." They are semantically related to the passive. They are, by frequency:

1. sich lassen + infinitive (modal coloring: können)
2. Other reflexive constructions (modal coloring: können)
   Wenn dem so ist, dann stellt sich die Frage...
3. sein, bleiben, stehen, geben, gehen+ infinitive with zu (modal coloring: müssen or können. the meaning müssen is more frequent)
   Das Budgetdefizit ist nicht zu ertragen.
   Das Ergebnis bleibt abzuwarten.
4. man constructions
5. Verb nominalization constructions

III. Nominalization

The more technical the text, the authors found, the less frequently "real" verbs, i.e. verbs which retain their concrete meaning, occur. Such verbs, however, are found to occur far more frequently when one counts the number of instances of verb nominalizations which are paired with "functional" verbs, i.e. verbs which are by and large not being used for lexical content, but rather functionally.
Example: Die Maschine wird zur Abschaltung gebracht.
Here "gebracht" serves less to convey the concrete meaning of carrying something than it does to perform a purely formal function within the sentence structure.
A Functional Verb Construction (FVC) consists of a Functional Verb (FV) and a noun (FN). The FVC often contains a prepositional phrase.

A. Characteristics of FVCs
1. The concrete meaning of the complete verb (kommen, setzen, bringen) has been largely supplanted.
2. FV + FN is commutable with verbs from the stem of the FN. (in Erstaunen geraten = staunen)
3. FV is commutable to a limited degree (zu Ende bringen/führen
4. In a main clause, the FN always stands at the end.
5. In a subordinate clause, the FN always stands directly in front of the infinitive.

B. FVCs by Frequency of Occurrence
1. zur Verfügung stellen
2. zur Verfügung stehen
3. zum Ausdruck kommen
4. in Frage kommen
5. Bedeutung zukommen
6. Gebrauch machen
7. eine Rolle spielen
8. zugrunde liegen

C. FV by Frequency of Occurrence
1. kommen
2. stehen
3. stellen

D. Preferred Prepositions in this construction are "in" and "zu"

IV. Extended Modifiers, Placed Before and After the Noun

In these noun phrases, the substantive is referred to as the "Reference Word," the first attribute as the "Core," which may then be modified by further attributes of the second to the fifth degree.

A. Attributes following the noun.
Example: "Ansätze zu einer Theorie des optimalen Wachstums..."

1. Genitive attributes and prepositional phrases make up the vast majority of such attributes.
2. Degree of Complexity and Frequency

a. "Core" alone	42%
b. Attributes of the second degree	43%
c. of the third degree	11%
d. of the fourth degree	3%

B. Attributes Before the Noun
Example: "Der voll haftende Gesellschafter..."

1. Type and Frequency of the "Core"

a. Past participle	52%
b. Present participle	32%
c. Adjective	16%

2. Type of Expansion by Frequency
   a. Prepositional
      "die durch die Gründung bedingten Gebühren"
   b. Adverbial
      "die dauernd wachsenden Aufwendungen"
   c. Accusative
      "mit einem die durchschnittliche Arbeitszeit darstellenden System"
   d. Dative
      "so muß die Bank entsprechend ihren dem Kunden mitgeteilten Vorschlägen stimmen"
3. Degree of Complexity and Frequency of Attributes

a. "Core" alone	42%
b. Attributes of the second degree	44%
c. of the third degree	10%
d. of the fourth degree	4%

V. Semantic Problem Areas of Particular Importance

A. Ambiguity in the Interpretation of Extended Modifier Constructions

Extended modifiers can make for tighter construction and can create pregnant expressions, but not infrequently at the cost of ambiguity in the interpretation. Ambiguities which can result from different combinations of the Reference Word with its attributes can often only be overcome by the reader's own knowledge of the field or by the context of the statement.

Example: "Diese Industrie umfaßt hauptsächlich auf Kapital aufgebaute Betriebe."

Diese Industrie umfaßt Betriebe, die hauptsächlich auf Kapital aufgebaut sind.

OR

Diese Industrie umfaßt hauptsächlich Betriebe, die auf Kapital aufgebaut sind.

B. Ambiguity in the Interpretation of Modal Verbs

Example: " Die Japaner haben vorexerziert, daß eine gezielte, befristete Gemeinschaftsforschung mehrerer Unternhemen nicht zu einer Aushöhlung des Wettbewerbs führen muß."

C. Use of the Subjunctive

1. Subjunctive I
   a. Expression of a wish or direction ("Man nehme...")
   b. Mark of indirect discourse
      Repetition of that which is repeated without taking responsibility for the accuracy of the information being repeated, i.e. objective reproduction.
2. Subjunctive II
   a. Expression of condition contrary to fact.
   b. Substitute for ambiguous forms of Subjunctive I in indirect discourse, i.e. objective reproduction.
   c. As an expression of doubt of skepticism about something which is being reported from another source, i.e. subjective reproduction.

Thus, the de Cort/Hessmann study describes for us, in far greater detail than had heretofore been the case, the most important grammatical, syntactic and semantic characteristics of written business German language, and, at the same time, defines for us those areas which are most in need of attention in teaching our students. As was already mentioned in the introduction to this paper, business German materials which are presently available not only make little or no use of such linguistic research, but virtually ignore the issue of didacticization of these important grammatical, syntactical, and semantic features. We are left, therefore, to devise our own methods of didacticizing these characteristics of business German.

The task of devising our own methods is, however, complicated by the fact that our students, for the most part, will have had very little, if any, introduction to these concepts before entering our classrooms, and the encounters they may have had will, more than likely, be negative ones. A cursory look at six[5] of the most commonly used introductory college German textbooks revealed, not surprisingly, the following interesting facts: (1) the passive voice and the so-called "passive substitutes," as well as the subjunctive I (if the latter was treated at all) were left to the last two chapters of these textbooks, (2) none of the textbooks discussed verb nominalization, and (3) only one presented a somewhat sketchy explanation of extended modifier constructions. In the sequencing common to American language pedagogy, all of the characteristics of business language fall within the realm of the "most difficult concepts" and are, therefore, left to the end of the textbooks, if they are treated at all. This has always puzzled me a bit with reference, particularly, to the passive voice, since its formation really is highly regular in German and no more or less difficult to learn to use than the active voice. Placing these concepts at the end of the textbooks may be more or less justifiable on the basis of difficulty, but we all know what happens to those items which are left to the end of the text—in the end-of-the-year rush they get minimal attention and may even be dropped from the syllabus by harried teachers who, proverbially, bit off more than could be chewed.

Well, perhaps these things are too difficult for even an introductory level explanation to the average first year student; these items may, indeed, be better handled in the second year. But, those of us who have had experience with teaching business German are not surprized at what a cursory look at six[6] of the most commonly used intermediate college level German textbooks reveals. Once again, even on the second year level, where there would seem to be less necessity to follow that old prescribed sequencing of the grammar, we are confronted with a situation analogous to what we saw on the introductory level. Of the six texts, five of them present the passive and subjunctive I within the last three chapters of the text, two of them do not introduce extended modifiers at all, and two of them leave discussion of extended modifiers until the last two pages of the text, where it is unconnected to anything else and can very conveniently be eliminated. Thus, even third year level German students probably do not have the proper foundation for studying those aspects of German grammar and syntax which are characteristic of business German.

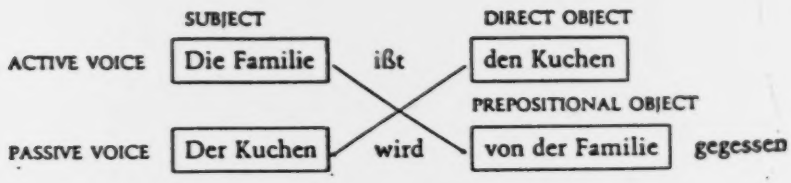
Such students may well have inordinate and unexpected difficulties with exercises based on the important grammatical and syntactical characteristics of business German for three reasons. Firstly, they may have had no previous experience with the concepts at all; secondly, if they had previous experience, it was probably hurried. Thirdly, let me discuss a phenomenon which I will label "passive resistance." The phenomenon occurs when the word "passive" is even uttered in the classroom; students begin to sigh heavily and turn off mentally. The same phenomenon takes place when one attempts to work with the subjunctive. Why should students have such a prejudice against these concepts? I have come to the conclusion that this may partially be the result of negative carry-over from poorly taught English grammar classes, as well as the result of the way these concepts are introduced in introductory and intermediate German classes. Students do not necessarily sigh about, for example, the German verb tenses, or adjectival nouns, or even prepositions. Nevertheless, prepositional usage, to name but one example, is a far more complicated issue in German than is the passive voice. They sigh about the passive voice because both their textbooks and their previous

instructors have frequently led them to believe that it is a very difficult concept which, on the one hand, they will have trouble mastering, and, on the other hand, is rare—they probably won't use it anyway. It should also be noted that such devices as the passive voice and extended modifiers are often considered the hallmark of "poor style" within the parameters of the traditional "creative writing"/"Alltagssprache" approach of both our textbooks and our teaching methods. These students are discouraged from writing very long and complicated sentences, from using the passive voice and extended modifiers, and are told that the subjunctive I is superfluous, since most speakers use the subjunctive II, even for indirect discourse. In addition, the methodologies for introducing these concepts in the textbooks, should the student actually receive such an introduction, are often confused and misleading in themselves, which compounds our problems in the business German classroom.

As an example of the often misleading and confusing information offered by our introductory and intermediate textbooks, I would like to take a closer look at the typical treatment of the passive voice. It is common for American textbook authors to begin their explanation of the passive voice with a short introduction which may or may not include a word about the usage of the passive voice. Rather typical of such introductions is the opening passage on the passive from Deutsche Sprache und Landeskunde, which reads as follows:

Passive Voice

Most sentences are in the *active voice*, which means that the subject performs the action or is the topic of the sentence. In the *passive voice*, the subject plays a passive rather than an active role. The subject is not the agent of the action but is acted upon by an agent that is introduced in a prepositional phrase with **von** or **durch**. **Von** is followed by the dative case and indicates the person or thing that causes the action; **durch** is followed by the accusative case and indicates the means of carrying out the action....



In both English and German, the active voice is used more frequently than the passive voice and is generally preferred, especially in speaking. It is simply a more direct way of saying who is doing what. The passive voice is used to emphasize the person or thing toward whom the action is directed, rather than the initiator of the action. It occurs more often in writing than speaking.[7]

Thus, the student is to make the following assumptions regarding the passive voice: (1) the subject of an active voice sentence is "active", whereas the subject of a passive voice sentence is "passive", whatever is to be understood by those two terms, (2) that there is a one-to-one correspondence between each active voice sentence and a passive voice counterpart, in which the prepositional phrase with "von" or "durch" introduces the personal agent or "means" respectively, (3) the active voice occurs more frequently and is preferred, (4) the active voice is a more "direct" way of expressing oneself, and (5) the passive voice should be used when one wishes to emphasize the person or thing toward which the action is directed; in other words, the choice of active or passive should be made on the basis of emphasis. This jumble of

misinformation is the foundation for the understanding of the passive which most of our students bring into the business German classroom.

This typical introduction to the passive reveals not only the authors' bias in favor of spoken "Alltagssprache" but also, at the same time, a lack of sophistication regarding the function and usage of the passive voice, which may reflect the authors' unfamiliarity with recent linguistic research, where the passive voice is a much discussed and disputed category. The linguists' discussions begin with the very essence of the question, i.e. what is "passive" and what is "active?" What exactly do these terms mean? Are these terms even adequate to express the difference between these two voices? What are the criteria for choosing the active or passive voice? Is it a matter of emphasis? Is the passive voice to be considered some kind of a transformational mirror image of the active voice? Does the emphasis really change to the object of the action in such a transformation? Judging by the size of bibliographies[8] dealing with the passive voice debate, these questions are not as simple as they may seem on the surface. Yet, our textbook authors confine themselves to very traditional, rigidly defined explanations of the concept, explanations which do a particular disservice to those students who will go on to study scientific, technical, and business German. For, after only a brief encounter with materials from the real world, these students will encounter a totally different situation than they were led to believe existed. A number of conditions will confront them: (1) they will find the passive voice appearing far more frequently than they were led to believe, (2) they will perceive that the passive is not simply a weak step child of the active voice which is to be avoided in favor of the active voice, (3) they will discover that there is often no one-to-one correspondence relationship between the active and passive voice; most passive sentences, indeed, occur without the prepositional phrase expression of the agent, (4) their attempts to generate passive voice sentences according to the transformational pattern will often yield incoherent sentences based upon intransitive, reflexive, or other verbs which cannot form the passive, and (5) they will learn that, due to the mutability of German word order, the so-called emphasis on the objective is not a particularly good criterion for the choice of the

passive over the active voice. As a matter of fact, as we have seen from the deCort/Hessmann study, the passive will occur twice as frequently in business German as in the everyday language and it will occur 75% of the time with no prepositional phrase to express the agent. Furthermore, I have always been bothered by the description of the passive voice as a transformation of an active voice sentence, in which the emphasis is supposedly placed on the objective by bringing it to the front of the sentence and making it "the subject of the sentence." This description would seem to be a derivation from transformational/generative grammar approaches, on the one hand, and an interference from English word order patterns on the other. If word order in German were as strictly tied to the SVO pattern as it is in English, then perhaps one might be justified in seeing a transformation of active to passive as basically a matter of change of emphasis, but those who argue from this direction seem to have forgotten about the incredible flexibility of German word order. In German, the subject of a passive sentence is no more likely to be in first--hence, emphasized--position than is the subject of an active sentence. As was suggested by the deCort/Hessmann study, in business German prepositional phrases and other adverbials occur in first position almost as often as does the subject. Indeed, it has been suggested that word order in written German has less to do with emphasis than with smooth transition from thought to thought, sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph. An example, with an appropriate passive voice sentence word order inversion follows:

> Während zwischen 1901 und 1944 insgesamt 34 Deutsche die höchste Ehrung für geistige Glanztaten empfingen, befanden sich von 1945 bis 1981 nur noch zwölf unter den Auserwählten. In der gleichen Zeit wurden aber immerhin 32 Engländer und 101 Amerikaner ausgezeichnet.
>
> Gedeihen kann Amerikas Spitzenforschung vor allem in der stimulierenden Atmosphäre jener angesehenen, meist von privaten Sitftungen getragenen Elite-Universitäten...[9]

Here it is particularly obvious that word order selection has been made on the basis of continuity of thought, and not upon any mechanical process by which the "object of the active

sentence is put into the nominative case and brought to the front of the sentence." This criterion of continuity holds whether the author has chosen the active or passive voice.

Therefore, we must insure that our students reconsider their previous conceptions about the use and function of the passive voice. As de Cort and Hessmann, in agreement with other more prominent linguists, put it :

> Die Welt im Passiv ist nicht eine passive Welt...sie ist vielmehr eine Welt, die einen Täter nicht namhaft machen will, sondern die Geschehnisse täterabgewandt begreifen will. Wenn vom Agens abgesehen wird, rückt das durch das Verb ausgedrückte Geschehn naturgemäß mehr in den Mittelpunkt. Da letzteres gerade für wissenschaftliche und fachliche Texte typisch ist—es werden Fakten und Entwicklungen festgestellt, wobei der Urheber in den Hintergrund tritt—kann es nicht wunder nehmen, daß gerade in solchen Texten passivsche Formulierungen bevorzugt werden...[10]

Thus, the passive voice is merely a method by which an author can discuss facts and developments where an agent is often of secondary importance and frequently remains nameless. The "von" and "durch" constructions are rarely necessary.

These insights into the use of the passive voice offer a valuable starting point for the development of a methodology for teaching the passive voice to students of business German. Firstly, in deciding whether to use the active or passive voice in their own developing expository style, students can be taught to use the criterion, that if the expression of an agent is absolutely necessary in the communication of their idea, the passive voice may not be the most appropriate choice. In addition, the word order of the passive sentence, as is the case with the active sentence, should be taught as a matter of thought transition, not necessarily as a matter of "emphasis." The matter of which verbs are most appropriately used in the passive voice should probably be taught by reference to model sentences in the materials being used—i.e. students should be aware of what verbs are being used passively and build their own sentence models only from those verbs. This technique will help the students avoid using verbs which create special problems or are incorrect or inappropriate for the passive voice.

such as intransitives and reflexives. It should also not be forgotten that , as pointed out in the deCort/Hessmann Study, in almost 40% of the instances of occurrence of the passive in business German, the passive is formed with a modal auxiliary, a complication which is treated only superficially, if at all, in students' earlier encounters with the passive.

The lack of attention to characteristics of the language which are of particular importance for gaining proficiency in business German is also apparent in the textbooks' introduction to a related topic, i.e. the so-called "passive substitutes." While most of the introductory and intermediate level textbooks do devote a page or two to "man" constructions, "sein/haben + zu" + infinitive and "sich lassen," many totally disregard the far more commonly occurring reflexive verb constructions, and all of the texts treat these constructions as "ways to avoid the passive voice," a rather dubious description. My students have always seemed to be confused by both the formation and use of these constructions. The confusion may stem, to a large extent, from the way in which the constructions are introduced to them, in a vacuum, out of the context of the more technical, scientific areas in which they make perfect sense. These constructions are far more aptly described, as is the passive voice itself, as ways of writing about facts, developments, and processes in which the agent is relatively insignificant. But, the proper presentation of such a description would presuppose that one would lay aside the biases against non-literary materials and present the constructions in a positive light as viable and commonly used stylistic alternatives in expository prose.

Exactly the same can, of course, be said for the treatment of the quotative subjunctive. Major problems in developing an appropriate methodology for the quotative subjunctive in the business German classroom stem not only from the fact that the so-called "special subjunctive" is often overlooked in elementary textbooks, but also from the fact that it is treated, in intermediate textbooks and beyond, as an infrequently occurring and rather elevated style which is normally avoided in everyday conversation. While this is certainly true, the lack of attention to those instances where the special subjunctive is an extremely

common occurrence reflects, once again, a bias on the part of the textbook authors in favor of the "Alltagssprache." The description of the use of the quotative subjunctive also almost always comes from the perspective of "indirect statements, questions, and commands" which are described as occurring with introductory phrases. Example: "Er sagte, er könnte nicht mitkommen." Such a description is obviously also borrowed from spoken German. The student, therefore, receives little or no practice with the quotative subjunctive as it appears in expository prose, where an introductory clause may or may not appear, and, if it does, it may appear only once at the very beginning of a long and complicated paragraph. In addition, the choice of indicative, subjunctive I or subjunctive II by the author of an expository text can reflect extremely important subtle nuances, which the deCort/Hessmann study identifies as the source of possible semantic problems which can occur more frequently in business German.

An excellent example of the use of the quotative subjunctive in business German occurs in one of the Goethe Institut packets, where the quotative subjunctive itself is, of course, not the object of didacticization:

IW-Studie: Stabilität überwiegend hausgemacht

München (SZ) - Die Eindämmung des Verbraucherpreisanstiegs während der letzten Jahre ist vor allem ein gemeinsamer Erfolg der Finanz- Geld- und Lohnpolitik. Erst in jüngster Zeit sind die Wirkungen des hausgemachten Stabilitätskurses durch sinkende Einfuhrpreise verstärkt worden. Zu diesem Ergebnis kommt das *Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft (IW), Köln* in einer Analyse der Verbraucherpreisentwicklung.

Der Mittelfristige Vergleich zeige, daß der größte Teil des Weges zu stabilen Verbraucherpreisen durch hausgemachte Faktoren geebnet wurde: Der Abbau des Preisanstiegs von 5,3% (1982) auf 2,2% (1985) war nur zu einem Zehntel durch preisgünstigere Einkäufe im Ausland erfolgt. Für die übrigen neun Zehntel hätten Bundesregierung, Bundesbank und die Tarifpartner durch Sparsamkeit und Zurückhaltung gesorgt, meint das Institut. Besonders deutlich werde die hausgemachte Stabilisierung bei den *Arbeitskosten*, deren Dynamik zwischen 1983 und 1985 um 1,8 Prozentpunkte zurückgeführt worden sei...[11]

Here, we not only have the quotative subjunctive being used without obvious introductory clauses, in contradiction to the typical introduction to the special subjunctive, but we also have an alternation between the indicative and special/general subjunctive, which may indicate subtle nuances or, more likely, the interference of the writer's everyday speech habits. This passage, indeed, makes an excellent teaching device for the use of the German quotative subjunctive itself, if the passage is approached from the standpoint of comparison/contrast with the practices which elevated expository prose style requires.

With respect to teaching devices for the business German classroom, I would like to consider one final area, that of extended modifiers. This is another area which is often treated in a confused and confusing manner in our textbooks. The confusion in the minds of the students often stems, I feel, from a transformational approach in textbooks which links the extended modifier to relative clauses, a highly complicated transformation often beyond the most grammatically astute of our students at this level. Even though these constructions may be considered "poor style" by traditionalists who are biased in favor of "creative writing" approaches to composition, we who deal with business German know that it is extremely important that our students learn to deal effectively with these constructions because of the incredible frequency with which they occur in business and technical German. I have not

found it particularly effective to deal with extended modifiers as transformed relative clauses; it seems to unduly confuse the students. An approach which first explains extended modifiers according to the deCort/Hessmann classification into "Kern" and degree and type of modification and then goes on to an exercise in which the students identify the variations of the pattern in a business German text seems to be the most effective.

In conclusion, I hope to have focused our attentions more closely on three major areas of concern:

(1) the need for more research in the area of linguistic description of business German,

(2) the problems for the average American student of business German created by the traditional "creative writing/ Alltagssprache" oriented approaches of most of our textbooks, and

(3) the need for the development of appropriate methodologies for the didacticization of the most important grammatical and syntactic features of business German.

ENDNOTES

[1] J. deCort and P. Hessmann, "Die wissenschaftliche Fachsprache der Wirtschaft. Eine Untersuchung ihrer syntaktischen und syntaktisch-lexikalischen Merkmale," Linguistica Antverpiensia, Vol. XI, (1977), p 27.

[2] The deCort/Hessmann study continued in two subsequent volumes of the Linguistica Antverpiensia, Vol. XII (1978), pp. 233-260, and Vol. XIII (1979), pp. 56-102.

[3] de Cort, XI, pp. 28-29.

[4] de Cort, XI, p. 30.

[5] The six first year texts are: (1) Clausing and Rings, Deutsch Natürlich, (Houghton Mifflin); (2) Moeller and Liedloff, Deutsch Heute: Grundstufe, (Houghton Mifflin);(3) Crean, et al. Deutsche Sprache und Landeskunde, (Random House); (4) Haas and Mathieu, Deutsch für Alle, (Wiley); (5) Sevin, Sevin and Bean, Wie geht's, (Holt, Rinehart); (6) Briggs and Crean, Alles Gute, (Random House).

[6] The six second year texts are: (1) Dippman, A Practical Review of German Grammar, (MacMillan); (2) Clausing, German Grammar: A Contrastive Approach, (Holt, Rinehart); (3) Helbling and Kempf, Deutsche Gegenwart, (Holt, Rinehart); (4) Moeller, et al, Kaleidoskop, (Houghton, Mifflin); (5) Bansleben, Perspektiven, (Holt, Rinehart); (6) Barrack and Rabura, Mosaik, (Random House).

[7] John E. Crean, et al., Sprache und Landeskunde (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 496

[8] Indicative of the scope of this debate is the bibliography to Gabriele Stein, Studies in the Function of the Passive, Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik, No. 97 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1979). Stein's book is an excellent introduction to the questions concerning the nature and presentation of the passive voice broached in this paper.

[9] H. O. Eglau, "Der Wettlauf in die Zukunft" Wirtschaftswoche, 17. Sept. 1982, p. 61.

[10] deCort, XI, p. 68.

[11] Taken from the Goethe Institut Packet "Magisches Viereck," p. 13. Materialien zum Deutschunterricht, (New York: Goethe Institut, 1985). Quote is attributed to Süddeutsche Zeitung of 6.5.86